

## Honoring Our Veterans

As a U.S. Navy veteran, I was proud to join state Veterans’ Affairs Commissioner Sean Connolly and State Senator Martin Looney for a special Wartime Service Medal ceremony for New Haven veterans. The medal was established by the state legislature in 2005 to honor all Connecticut veterans with qualifying wartime military service. For more information about this medal, or veterans services, please visit the state Department of Veterans’ Affairs website at [www.ct.gov/ctva](http://www.ct.gov/ctva).



## Welcoming New Haven Students Back to School

A student’s first day of school is usually fueled with the nervous excitement of meeting new friends and teachers. Last fall, Lincoln-Bassett Elementary School students were also greeted by a large group of community members including clergy, elected officials and other individuals devoted to their educational success. Every child should feel confident in knowing that they have an entire community supporting and encouraging them toward their educational success.

## Helping First-Time Homeowners

Increasing opportunities for individuals to become homeowners is not only invaluable to potential homeowners, but also to Connecticut’s economic growth. This year, the Department of Housing’s Affordable Homeownership provided funding for programs for first-time homebuyers, including Habitat for Humanity of Greater New Haven, Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven and the City of New Haven. For more information about home ownership programs call 1-844-CTHOME or visit [www.chfa.org](http://www.chfa.org).



*Your State Senator*

# Gary Winfield

Representing New Haven & West Haven



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## Protecting Your Privacy



News stories about data breaches have become too common. That is why my colleagues and I unanimously passed one of the strongest cybersecurity laws in the nation. The law requires health insurance companies to ensure that customers’ most private data is kept secure by developing comprehensive security programs to safeguard the personal information of their enrollees and insureds. For tips and resources on protecting your identity, use the links provided by the state Department of Consumer Protection at [www.ct.gov/dcp](http://www.ct.gov/dcp) under “Awareness & Prevention.”

## Transparency & Fairness for Electricity Pricing

Growing numbers of electric consumers reported being coaxed, through the lure of low rates, into signing variable-rate contracts. Many testified that, soon after the contracts were signed, and without warning, their rates increased significantly and they were charged costly fees to terminate their contracts. Electric customers deserve stable, predictable rates. That is why we passed legislation to **ban variable-rate residential electric contracts beginning October 1, 2015**.

Also, please be aware that state law requires that every residential electric customer’s monthly bill must display his or her rate for the coming month. To file a consumer complaint, contact PURA: **1-800-382-4586** or [www.ct.gov/pura](http://www.ct.gov/pura).



## Lower Taxes for Veterans

Senate Democrats led passage of a tax cut for military veterans. Veterans will no longer pay Connecticut income tax on their military retirement pay. State law used to provide for a 50 percent exemption to retired members of the Armed Forces; now there is a 100 percent exemption. Not only is this the right thing to do for those who fought to defend our freedoms, it also helps keep veterans in our state to build our skilled workforce. Many of today’s growing businesses are looking to hire highly skilled workers with strong leadership abilities, qualities that most veterans possess.





## Property Tax Cuts to Save Families & Businesses Hundreds of Millions of Dollars

Whether talking with families, seniors, small-business owners or others in our community, the most frequent concern expressed to me is about property taxes. Historically, state law has limited the ways in which cities and towns can generate revenue almost entirely to property taxes. That's why I am helping lead the charge to limit these crippling taxes.

### Cutting Car Taxes

In 2016, **car taxes throughout the state will be capped** at 32 mills, and in 2017 and every year thereafter, the cap will be lowered to 29.36 mills. About one-third of our towns currently have a mill rate of 32 or above, and more than half have a mill rate above 29.36. Statewide, it is estimated that families and businesses will benefit from a **tax cut of more than \$78 million in 2016 and \$107 million in 2017**.



### Increasing Municipal Aid

While the **car tax cap will cut local taxes by hundreds of millions of dollars** throughout the state over the next several years, more needs to be done at the local level to get property taxes under control. Democrats in the General Assembly also created a **new source of revenue for municipalities**. Beginning in 2016, a portion of the Connecticut sales tax revenue, 0.5 percent of the tax, will be **designated to every municipality in the state to help alleviate pressure on the property tax**.

### Capping Municipal Spending

To ensure that additional state aid to towns and cities is utilized for property tax relief, rather than increasing spending, **we've passed a cap on municipal spending**.

## Supporting Family Caregivers



Nearly 500,000 Connecticut residents act as caregivers, and many of them feel unprepared to provide the care needed to keep their loved ones healthy. The CARE Act will help to ensure that caregivers are given follow-up care instructions when a patient is discharged from the hospital. It will also reduce costly hospital readmissions.

The CARE Act requires hospitals to:

- Provide patients with the opportunity to designate a caregiver during their admission;
- Make reasonable attempts to notify the designated caregiver if the patient is to be discharged; and
- Provide the caregiver with instructions on how to perform medication management, wound care, injections or other medical tasks when the patient returns home.

## Easing the Burden of Testing on High School Students

Until this school year, 11th-graders were overburdened with duplicative tests. In addition to taking the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test, many high school juniors also took the SAT, ACT and Advanced Placement Exams. Senate Democrats led bipartisan passage of legislation to eliminate the requirement that 11th-grade students take the SBAC test and require instead that they take a nationally recognized test such as the SAT at no cost to the students and their families.

This not only reduces over-testing, it also provides a free college readiness exam for Connecticut's high school students, making college more accessible to all students.



## Restoring Trust, and Providing Transparency and Accountability Within Our Criminal Justice System



Law enforcement officers should use only the amount of force necessary to mitigate an incident, make an arrest, or protect themselves or others from harm. All too often, members of the public have called into question whether an officer's use of force was excessive. Additionally, Connecticut residents have been harassed, threatened and arrested for exercising their right to record police in an effort to deter potential abuse.

We passed legislation to reform our criminal justice system so there is greater transparency to protect citizens and police officers alike. This new law sets uniform standards for the use of body cameras to protect citizens from abuse and officers from false allegations. In cases of police officer-involved deaths, this legislation requires a prosecutor from a different judicial district than where the incident occurred, or a special assistant or deputy assistant state's attorney to conduct the investigation—removing the potential for a conflict of interest.

## A Second Chance Success



I helped lead passage this year of an important new law that reduces the penalties for drug possession and overhauls the pardons and parole system, effectively giving people convicted of non-violent crimes a second chance at living a productive life. The Second Chance Society law will lower incarceration rates for non-violent crimes so that minor offenses do not carry disproportionate penalties, a lifetime of stigma, the loss of voting rights, the revocation or suspension of certain licenses, and impairing other rights.